

Capstone, Olympia Cohort
Spring 2026



MPA Mission Statement: Our students, faculty and staff create learning communities to explore and implement socially just, democratic public service. We think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, work collaboratively, embrace diversity, value fairness and equity, advocate powerfully on behalf of the public, and imagine new possibilities in order to accomplish positive change in our workplace and in our communities.

Teaching team:

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Location: SEM 2 D1105

Days and Times: Thursdays 6pm-9pm, Saturday May 30th 9am-2pm

Delivery mode: This course is offered in-person. To give students ample time to work on their capstone projects, Capstone classes **do not meet every week**. The schedule in this document and the course schedule on Canvas list the dates when classes are held.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Students “cap off” their studies in the MPA program by completing a Capstone project. Capstone is the opportunity to reflect upon, and integrate, the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) you have acquired throughout the MPA program. In the Capstone course, students engage in an applied demonstration project of their own design (demonstrating the knowledge, skills and abilities gained in the MPA program) as related to the MPA mission statement. Using the mission of the MPA program, you will reflect upon and integrate your MPA experiences in a way that is meaningful for you as you define and practice public service.

Knowledge is the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject. For example, you might have knowledge of government structures used in org analysis. This doesn’t mean you know how to be a org analyst. It means you know the models.

Skills are the proficiencies developed through training or experience. For example, you have demonstrated skills in applying the org models when informing restructuring decisions. Skills are something that has been learned. You can develop skills through the transfer of knowledge.

Abilities are the qualities of being able to do something. There is a fine line between skills and abilities. The differentiator is whether the ability was learned or innate. Ability is a strength that is innate to you. The abilities to organize and prioritize structural needs are abilities that can help you develop your organization decision making skills. The MPA program improved your abilities, but the talent or ability you had for some things existed within you to start.

Learning Objectives:

- *Demonstrate* KSAs gained in the MPA program regarding their practical applications for competent transformational managers, leaders, and analysts of data, information, and decision making.
- *Integrate* the seven themes of the MPA mission: 1) think critically and creatively; 2) communicate effectively; 3) work collaboratively; 4) embrace diversity; 5) value fairness and equity; 6) advocate powerfully on behalf of the public; 7) imagine new possibilities to accomplish positive change in our workplaces and in our communities.
- *Reflect* on how and why program-wide lessons added to students' practical learning, tools, and personal wisdom.

Required Books:

Coburn, N. (2011). *Bazaar Politics: Power and Pottery in an Afghan Market Town*, Stanford University Press, ISBN: 978-0804776721

Criado Perez, C. (2021). *Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men*, Harry Abrams publisher, ISBN: 978-1419735219

Lewis, M. (2026). *Who Is Government?: The Untold Story of Public Service*, Riverhead Books, ISBN: 979-8217047826

Additional readings such as policy briefs, articles, or podcasts will be posted to Canvas.

ASSIGNMENTS & Evaluation Criteria

Assignments are evaluated on four criteria:

1. Demonstrates conceptual accuracy
2. Demonstrates application and/or synthesis of the content
3. Supports arguments or assessments with appropriate sources
4. Demonstrates clear communication

Assignment 1: Revised Capstone Proposal

Due Week 1: posted to Canvas by 6:00pm April 2

Write a one page "Capstone Proposal" describing what you propose to complete for your Capstone project. Explain how your Capstone will demonstrate the key KSAs you learned in the MPA program. Explain what parts of the MPA mission are demonstrated by your Capstone. If you already completed this assignment in Winter ATPS, this is an opportunity to revise and refine the proposal with further detail. If you are comfortable with your existing proposal, please just resubmit it so that we have access to it in this course's Canvas site. For students joining Capstone 2026 that were not in ATPS in Winter 2026, please prepare a one page capstone proposal for faculty review.

Assignment 2 : Learning Inventory & Resource List

Due Week 2 posted to Canvas by 6:00pm April 9 and to be shared with peers in seminar of Week 3. Assignment will be uploaded into a discussion space in Canvas.

Purpose: Reflect on KSAs gained from coursework and create a list of resources.

Instructions: Create a list, or grid, or outline, or chart, or image, or website, or essay of your learning in the MPA program. *How you present the information is up to you.* The only requirements are:

1. Include the titles, quarter, year, and a brief description of the classes, individual learning contracts, or internships you took that were most valuable to you in the MPA program.
2. Include at least one KSA you learned from each class, individual learning contract, or internship you identified. What did you take away from each experience?
3. Most importantly, also submit a list of key essential resources that you have amassed during the program. This will be a “go to” list that you now use or anticipate using for your daily work in the PA field. The resources may be books, articles, tools, databases, websites, blogs, journals, magazines, professional associations, or fellow students/leaders you’ve met during the program.

Assignment 3: Re-Thinking Critical Thinking Essay

Due Week 3 posted to Canvas by 6:00pm. April 16

Purpose: Iterative revision and reflection are key components to growing as a writer and thinker. This assignment asks students to leverage the knowledge and experiences accumulated over the course of the program to revise one Critical Thinking Paper from Fall Quarter 2025. Students will use writing prompts rooted in the structures of critical thinking to reflect on, reconsider, relate, and potentially revise an analysis provided in the beginning of the program.

Length: This paper should be between 2 - 3 pages, typed, double spaced with 12 point Times New Roman font, have one inch margins, and follow APA guidelines for citations and references. Note: Page length does not include works cited page, title page, or abstract.

Assignment 4 Application Packet and DEI Statement

Due Week 4 Posted to Canvas by 6:00pm. April 23

Purpose: Capstone is the last step of your MPA career. Whether you are planning to utilize your new degree in a new position or not, it is important to update your resume with your new skills and prepare for whatever your next position will be.

Instructions:

1. Find a **current** job posting for a job you want (move upward, lateral, to a different agency, or even your dream job for your new MPA) in any area of public service (federal,

tribal, state, county, city, or nonprofit). Make sure it is a job you would actually want. You can usually find job postings online at the organizations' human resource or personnel website, for example <https://www.careers.wa.gov>, Public Service Careers, or Nonprofit Jobs in Washington State.

2. Write a **cover letter** and submit an **updated resume** tailored for the job you found. Use the same key terms from the job posting within your resume and cover letter.
3. Prepare a DEI Statement that could accompany your application.
4. Develop a **list of questions** you will ask the interviewers about the job you are applying for.

Your assignment must include a link to the job posting, a cover letter, a resume, and list of questions (these can be one document, or multiple documents).

Assignments 5 & 6: Capstone Project and Visual Aid with Presentation

Due Posted on Canvas by 6:00pm.

Draft 1 Due: Week 7, May 14

Final Version Due based on when you signed up for your final presentation: Week 9, May 30th or Week 10, June 4th

Purpose: Demonstrate to the program and the community what you have learned in the MPA program. This project can take any form you wish, as long as it demonstrates the knowledge, skills, and abilities you have gained in this program. It may be a research study, organizing a neighborhood, facilitation of a public meeting, a case study, an organizational assessment or intervention, policy analysis, program evaluation plan, business plan, etc.

Projects must be about public service. Public service is defined very broadly to include efforts of governments, community-based organizations, community members, nonprofits, and political organizations (perhaps even private organizations doing public activities). You may work on your projects individually or in teams.

Projects must:

1. Produce an output of some kind (something tangible) and a presentation with a visual aid on the process/production of the output;
2. Be outcome oriented with a focus on making change or having an effect in some way;
3. Be MPA mission-centric, and represent KSAs learned/gained as they relate to all or part of the mission; and
4. Be applied – potential outcome in application in an agency, community, organization, discipline (for traditional research paper, for example), etc.

What did your Capstone project produce? The purpose of this assignment as a product is to demonstrate what you've learned in your MPA program (KSAs) through an applied Capstone project that integrates the MPA mission.

- Presentation: 15 minutes. We expect the presenters to take 15 minutes to explain what their Capstone project demonstrates (connection to MPA mission, KSAs, and how project is applied to public service).
- Q&A Session: 5 minutes.
- Total: 20 minutes.
- A visual aid is required for the presentation. Consider using one or more of the following [presentation tools in this link](#).

All presentations should adhere to the following guidelines:

- 1) Any photographs or graphs/charts should have summary notes about what is being displayed.
- 2) All photographs or graphs/charts should be cited with their source.
- 3) Consider Accessibility: contrast (dark background, light font), limit red and green (color blindness), font size, readability, universal design accessibility. <https://doit.uw.edu/brief/tips-for-delivering-an-accessible-presentation/>
- 4) If using a video, it may not take up significant presentation time.
- 5) All members of the group are expected to participate in the presentation/facilitation as able.

Invite family, friends, colleagues, supporting organizations to final presentations as appropriate.

Schedule 2026

| Week | Topic | Reading | Due |
|----------------------------|---|--|--|
| Week 1 April 2 | Mission Theme 1) Think Critically and Creatively Guest Speakers: 6:00-7:15 Seminar: 7:30-8:30 Check-ins w/faculty: 8:30-9:00 | Readings: Coburn, <i>Bazaar Politics</i> All Seminars: Students each bring 3 questions directly about the assigned readings with specific quotes. | Assignment #1: Capstone Proposal (Revised) |
| Week 2 April 9 | No Class Project work time | | Assignment #2: Learning Inventory & Resource List |
| Week 3 April 16 | Mission Themes 2 & 3) Communicate Effectively & Work Collaboratively Guest Speakers: 6:00-7:15 Seminar: 7:30-8:30 Check-ins w/faculty: 8:30-9:00 | Readings: Video, Truth Matters: Fruitful Disagreement in an Age of Division Video, AI to Improve Your Communication Skills Podcast, When Over-Collaboration Leads to Indecision | Assignment #3: Re-thinking Critical Thinking Essay |

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| Week 4 April 23 | Mission Theme 4) Embrace Diversity Guest Speakers: 6:00-7:15 Seminar: 7:30-8:30 Check-ins w/faculty: 8:30-9:00 | Reading: Criado Perez, <i>Invisible Women</i> | Assignment #4: Application packet and DEI Statement |
| Week 5 April 30 | No Class Project work time | | |
| Week 6 May 7 | Mission Theme 5) Value Fairness and Equity Guest Speakers: 6:00-7:15 Seminar: 7:30-8:30 Check-ins w/faculty: 8:30-9:00 | Readings: Podcast, Making Diversion Programs Work for the People Video, Honoring 30 Years of NAHASDA Video, Using Data for Effective Advocacy | |
| Week 7 May 14 | Mission Theme 6) Advocate Powerfully on Behalf of the Public Guest Speakers: 6:00-7:15 Seminar: 7:30-8:30 Check-ins w/faculty: 8:30-9:00 | Readings: Brief: Planning in a Polycrisis Podcast: Open borders | Assignments #5 & #6: Draft product, Draft visual aid |
| Week 8 May 21 | No Class Project work time | | |
| Week 9 Thursday May 28 | Mission Theme 7) Imagine New Possibilities to Accomplish Positive Change in our Workplaces and in our Communities Guest Speakers: 6:00-7:15 Seminar: 7:30-8:30 Check-ins w/faculty: 8:30-9:00 | Reading: Lewis, <i>Who is Government</i> | |
| Week 9 Saturday May 30 | Final Presentations 9am-12:30pm Lunch with Tribal Governance cohort 1pm-2pm | | Assignments #5 & #6: Final product, Final visual aid |
| Week 10 Thursday, June 4 | Final presentations 6:00pm-9:00pm *Cohort give backs | | Assignments #5 & #6: Final product, Final visual aid |

Course Policies

Faculty Commitments and Responsibilities

Trauma-Informed Principles Commitment: While faculty and students experience traumatic events throughout their lives, the global pandemic and endemic racism have created ongoing, overarching traumatic events, heightened by each person's individual experiences. The result can be "[a cognitive burden comparable to a full-time job.](#)" Faculty are committed to recognizing trauma and resisting re-traumatization by integrating [Trauma Informed Teaching & Learning Principles](#) throughout the course. Specifically, we seek to create an atmosphere that is respectful, transparent and trustworthy by making expectations clear and communicating with the goal of building learning community trust and understanding to foster student choice by, when possible, offering options for engagement, readings, and communication; and lastly, to empower student voice by responding to the various forms of privilege and oppression silencing and limiting decision-making in learning communities.

Mandatory Reporter: The Evergreen State College is committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students that is free of all forms of discrimination and harassment, including sexual assault, domestic/relationship violence, sexual harassment, stalking, and retaliation. We are committed to your well-being and safety, and we're open to discuss any concerns you may have.

Please know that we are Responsible Employees, meaning that we are legally obligated to share information with the College's Title IX Coordinator in certain situations that help ensure a student's safety and care is being addressed. Although we have to notify the Title IX Coordinator, it will be up to you to control how your case is handled, including whether to pursue a formal complaint or legal action or not. The goal is to make sure you are aware of a range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need.

If you are seeking confidential support, please feel free to contact the following confidential resources: Office of Sexual Violence Prevention and Response (Sem I, 4119, 360.867.5221, jonese@evergreen.edu), Student Wellness Services (Sem I 2110, 360.867.6200), or SafePlace Olympia (521 Legion Way SE, Olympia, 360.754.6300)

Reasonable Accommodations will be provided for any student who qualifies for them through a working relationship with Access Services. If any student has a health condition or disability that may require accommodations in order to effectively participate in this class, please request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact the office of [Access Services](#) for Students with Disabilities (867-6348 or 6364) to receive a letter of accommodation. If the student is already working with the office of Access Services the faculty should have received a letter clearly indicating the student has a disability that requires academic accommodations. Information about a disability or health condition will be regarded as confidential.

Student Commitments and Responsibilities

Participation & Attendance: Students are required to attend each class meeting in its entirety. Participation includes focusing on class content, contributing in class and seminar, listening to others, taking notes, completing class interactive exercises, avoiding distractions, and listening to and dialoging with the guest speakers. If an absence is unavoidable, faculty should be notified prior to a class and/or seminar absence.

After one absence per quarter (= 3 hours accumulated is one absence), make-up work may be assigned by faculty. Makeup work must be completed by the end of the last scheduled class meeting to receive course credit. After 6 hours of absences total in one quarter, you may be denied full credit for the course. Also, after reoccurring absences (e.g., being late to class; regularly missing an hour of class), you may be denied full credit. Finally, if you do miss a class, you are expected to do the reading for the class meeting missed, turn in any assignments that were due on the class date missed, and review class notes and materials available on Canvas.

Late Assignments: Turning in assignments late is unacceptable. If there is an unavoidable need to turn in an assignment late, the student should contact their faculty no later than the original assignment's due date to discuss options. Late assignments must be completed by the revised due date to ensure full receipt of course credit. Late assignments may or may not receive feedback.

Credit: Students will receive 6 graduate credits at the end of spring quarter if all course requirements have been satisfactorily completed. Students will be evaluated based upon their progress towards the learning objectives, assessed from classroom, seminar, and assignment performance. **No partial credit will be awarded.** Full loss of credit decisions will be made by the faculty team. Full loss of credit for two terms of core may result in dismissal from the MPA program. Failing to meet course requirements (e.g. not completing one or more assignments, completing one or more assignments late, or multiple absences) may constitute denial of total credit at the discretion of the faculty. Students at risk of losing credit will receive written notification prior to the end of the quarter.

Human Subjects Review (HSR): Students may NOT conduct primary data collection without HSR approval by faculty. There may also be requirements regarding research protocols with governments (Tribes/Feds/state/local), Native communities, private organizations or nonprofits. For more information see the [Institutional Review Board Student Guide](#).

Plagiarism: (i.e., using other peoples' work as your own) may result in total loss of credit for the class and may result in dismissal from the MPA program. See the [MPA Handbook](#), for the MPA Academic Honesty policy and additional information. Academic Honesty at TESC: "Plagiarism is defined as representing the works or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise. It includes, but is not limited to, copying materials directly, failure to cite sources of arguments and data, and failure to explicitly acknowledge joint work or authorship of assignments." Source: <http://www.evergreen.edu/advising/academichonesty.htm>

Evaluation: Student's course self-eval and eval of seminar faculty are both required for credit as submitted via my.evergreen.edu .

Technology Use & Learning Styles: We all have different ways of learning. Faculty will actively work towards providing information in multiple formats: tactile, auditory, visual, experiential, etc. However, we are limited to means appropriate for the classroom environment. Surfing the internet, checking social media, reading e-mail, playing with cell phones are not appropriate use of class time. Consult your faculty to discuss technology use and learning style options.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI): Discuss how you plan to use AI with faculty as there are many types of AI with multiple ethical considerations. AI is also experimental and is often inaccurate. If you use an AI tool in your assignments, cite it as per APA guidance: <https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/resources/publishing-tips/policy-generative-ai>

Guest policy: Guests are welcome to visit our learning community during class time and seminar meetings with approval from course faculty in advance of each requested visit. It is the host student's responsibility to contact the faculty with details about the requested guest visit and await approval. Prospective students may visit one class meeting of first-year Core without advance faculty approval, but must notify faculty that they are present prior to the beginning of class. All guests must abide by all social contract, conduct code, and nondiscrimination policy guidelines as aforementioned in this handbook. Per faculty discretion, guests may be asked to leave and not permitted to return to class if these guidelines are violated in any way including behavior that disrupts the learning community. All guests are expected to minimize their participation in class and seminar discussions.

Inclement Weather: In the event of bad weather or emergencies students should check with for announcements of campus closures. Students can call the main campus line 360-867-6000 to get the latest news regarding a campus closure or delay. Faculty may decide to still hold class virtually or may cancel a class meeting even if campus is open and we will send an all-class email prior to the start of class. Students are responsible for checking email and ensuring viable online access options are available to them.

Communicating: Email and Canvas are our primary means of communication. Students are responsible for checking their Evergreen email and Canvas regularly.

Use of Student Work Posted to Canvas: Students post their work to an online learning platform known as "Canvas". Our class Canvas site is accessible to faculty and students registered for this course only. The work students post on Canvas is their private intellectual property and may not be used or distributed without their expressed consent. Some work may also be owned by governments, organizations, or communities. Their informed and voluntary consent would also need to be obtained for use and appropriate cultural protocols would also need to be followed.

Audio or Video Recording: No audio or video recording may occur during class without the informed and voluntary consent of the students and faculty involved.

Collective Commitments and Responsibilities

Tribal Acknowledgement for both Olympia and Tacoma locations of The Evergreen State

College: The Squaxin Island Tribe's habitation of the land on and around the inlets of the Southern Salish Sea, including what is now the City of Olympia and here at The Evergreen State College spans thousands of years. The ancestral families who lived and thrived here: They named Budd Inlet Steh-Chass, and they named Eld Inlet where the campus is located Squi'Aitle. Today, the Squaxin Island Tribe continues to live on and steward the lands and waters of the Southern Salish Sea. We acknowledge the Squaxin Island Tribe as it continues to live on and steward these lands and waters.

We acknowledge that we are on the traditional homelands of the Puyallup Tribe. The Puyallup people have lived on and stewarded these lands since the beginning of time, and continue to do so today. We recognize that this acknowledgement is one small step toward true allyship and we commit to uplifting the voices, experiences and histories of the Indigenous people of this land and beyond.

We respect and acknowledge the Squaxin Island and Puyallup Tribes, and other Tribes across the Americas, and their many contributions to The Evergreen State College (in support of education, Tribal sovereignty, environmental stewardship). This acknowledgement is one small step toward respect and collaboration with the aim of uplifting the voices, cultures and histories of the Tribes of these lands and waters.

Multiculturalism & Diversity: Faculty and students will actively work towards contextually weaving multiculturalism and diversity throughout our learning as related to readings, lectures, seminar, and group projects. In a learning community students and faculty share the responsibility for the teaching and learning environment. Multiculturalism and diversity is to be understood as aiming to promote constructive community discourse about issues of culture, power, and differences.

Conduct & Conflict Resolution: Please refer to the [MPA Student Handbook](#). Discuss any problems involving others in the learning community directly with the individuals involved (so long as the concerned party feels safe doing so). Possessing respect for others is fundamental to an open, free, and educational dialogue. All students are expected to support and contribute to a well-functioning MPA classroom and learning community. Behavior that disrupts the learning community may be grounds for disciplinary action, including dismissal from the MPA program. All students will be held accountable for maintaining the highest of academic standards.

We will abide by the [social contract](#): WAC 174-121-010 College philosophy.

We will abide by the [student conduct code](#) (including academic integrity and plagiarism):

Chapter 174-123 WAC, Student Conduct Code & Grievance/Appeals Process:

<https://www.evergreen.edu/offices-services/academic-affairs/student-conduct-code>.

We will abide by the [non-discrimination policies and procedures at TESC](#)

Additional Campus Resources

- [Academic and Career Advising](#)
- [Academic honesty](#)
- [Access Services for Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Alcohol/drug use](#)
- [All Official College Policies; Assistive Technology \(AT\) Lab](#)
- [Basic Needs Resources](#)
- [BLISS \(BIPOC & LGBTQ+ Intersectional Support Services\)](#)
- [Code of student rights and responsibilities](#)
- [COVID-19](#)
- [Conflict Resolution ; Counseling Services](#)
- [Evergreen's Social Contract](#)
- [Free Speech Guide](#)
- [Library](#)
- [Media Loan](#)
- [MPA Student Resources](#)
- [Non-discrimination policy](#)
- [QuaSR: Quantitative & Symbolic Reasoning Center](#)
- [Sexual Misconduct reporting and resources](#)
- [Student Activities](#)
- [Student Employment](#)
- [Student Engagement, Equity, and Support](#)
- [Student Wellness Services](#)
- [The Writing Center](#)